3.

PREPARATION

FOR THE

COMING OF CHRIST;

INCULCATED:

IN

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT NEWBURY, OCTOBER 19, 1803.

BEING

THE DAY APPOINTED BY PROCLAMATION

FOR

A GENERAL FAST.

...er experienced; and for the re-
...sings of peace, to our exhausted

...indeed, on that occasion, was
...* and it must now be a

By J. Richards

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PREPARATION

FOR THE

COMING OF CHRIST,

INCULCATED.

REV. xvi. 15.—*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

ALAS, my Brethren! how short a time is it since we were called to meet here, to rejoice and give thanks to God, for the termination of a war, the most bloody and ruinous that modern nations have ever experienced; and for the return of the blessings of peace, to our exhausted country!

Our joy, indeed, on that occasion, was mingled with fear*, and it must now be a matter of the most heart-felt concern to us all, that the glimpse of light, which then seemed to be opening upon us, has proved as transitory and illusory as our fears then foreboded; and it can but be matter of real affliction to *every good man*, that that light in which we were willing

* See the author's ESTIMATE OF THE PEACE, a Discourse delivered on the late Thanksgiving Day.

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to rejoice, is so quickly followed by such a state of darkness and trouble, as *all*, unless the irreligious and thoughtless, who consider not the ways of God towards men, must contemplate with the most painful and anxious apprehensions.

They who have studied the history of past times, and have been piously attentive to the hand of God, which has successively lifted up, and cast down, the nations of the earth; and observed the means and instruments by which the divine purposes have been accomplished, cannot help suspecting that the *singular* and *awful* events, which the men of this generation are called to witness, must be intended ultimately—and perhaps, very soon—to effect some great change in human affairs; even that mighty change of which the ancient prophets of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, have said so much; a change which goes to the utter subversion,—as far as existing principles and practices may be at variance with truth and righteousness—of the present order of things, preparatory to the *coming of that kingdom of God on earth*, for which Jesus Christ hath taught his disciples daily to pray. Sentiments and apprehensions these, which none but the deistical, or the extremely thoughtless, will treat with contempt.

O thou! who, by thy inspiration, teacheth men wisdom, teach us!—teach our thoughtless, guilty

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guilty nation!—that we may discern *the signs of the present times*, and *now* know the things which belong to our peace, before they be for ever hid from our eyes, and nothing shall remain, to the men of this generation, who blind their eyes and harden their hearts, but darkness and wrath! Open our ears to hear this TIMELY WARNING of the Lord of Glory!—*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

When our gracious Redeemer was about to leave his disciples and go to his father, and they asked him, *What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* He let them know that the end was not *by and by*. A long series of wickedness, apostacy, corruption, and persecution, was to intervene. But he informed them of certain signs which should, immediately, precede his coming, and strictly charged them to watch and be ready; to consider themselves as servants who had all their particular work assigned them, and who must give account of their conduct, and be dealt with accordingly. *Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. For the son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not*

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when the master of the house cometh, at evening, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping: And what I say unto you, I say unto all—to all my disciples to the end of time—*watch.*

This was our Lord's charge when about to leave our world, and go to prepare a place for us. And here, when, by his servant John, he made known to the churches the things to come to pass in after ages; and by a succession of visions, exhibited the great outlines of the history of the church, and of those nations with which its fortunes were to be chiefly connected, to the end of this dispensation; and when the prophetic scenery was now drawing near to a close, he solemnly pronounced these interesting words, *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

Impressed, as I acknowledge I am, with the belief that the time of Christ's *second advent* is not at a *very* distant period, (as most seem to imagine) but, that, at the *present moment*, he is knocking at the door,—and, consequently, expecting a time of unusual affliction and trouble, —I can think of no passage of sacred writ more proper to recommend to your present attention than this before us. *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.*

Behold! This bespeaks the vast importance of

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of what is uttered; the vast importance of due attention. May every one here, attend with serious devotion, and be sincerely concerned that his mind may be profited! Without this disposition, this service will be mockery, and we shall but add to that mass of our national guilt, which already threatens our destruction.

We shall *first* endeavour to ascertain *with what events* this solemn warning stands connected—we shall *secondly* notice the *interesting fact* to which our attention is here called, *the coming of Christ as a thief*—unexpectedly.—And then, *thirdly*, I shall urge upon you the serious consideration of *the part which all Christians ought to act*, in view of the speedy and sudden coming of Christ; and *the blessedness* of those who attend to their duty.

I. We shall endeavour, in the *first* place, to ascertain with what events the words of the text stand connected; for some tolerable information on this subject is absolutely necessary to our feeling the full force of this solemn warning.

In this book of prophecy, we have several sets of visions, or scenic representations of the things which were to take place in those nations, with which (as we have before observed) the fortunes of the church of God, were to be chiefly connected; namely, the *fourth monarchy*, shewn to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel; or these western parts of the Roman empire, to which

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the dominion has now been given for nearly *two thousand* years; and which is not to give place to any other, until destroyed to make way for HIS *reign, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that, which shall not be destroyed.*

To form any proper notions about what is written in this book, it is not only necessary to have a tolerable acquaintance with the symbolic language in general, and with the signification of the symbols used in this book in particular, but to give a very close attention to the curious machinery, or plan, of this wonderful system of prophetic visions. But this is a subject into which we cannot now enter far*. I shall, therefore, only observe, that the train of prophetic representation is often interrupted; or, so to speak, the curtain drops, at certain intervals, and a new scene is presented, either illustrative of the former, or to introduce the representation of some matters, which could not otherwise appear without confusion. This is particularly the case as to what appears in chapters the XIIth and XIIIth, and, indeed, in the XIVth, whilst in the XIth we have a scene presented, consisting of several compartments, representing, in miniature, such principal facts of the Apocalyptic history, as may be necessary for

* On the signification of symbols, the reader may consult, if he please, my SYMBOLICAL VOCABULARY, given in the SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

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assisting the reader in tracing *the connection* of the whole. And, thus, there is sometimes occasioned a two-fold connection, one which may be called direct, and the other indirect, which circumstance, though it may sometimes prove a cause of confusion to the careless reader, is of the greatest use to the attentive. The scene of these *seven vials*, or bowls *of the wrath of God*, which are given to the *seven angels* to pour out upon the earth, as represented here, in the *fifteenth* and *sixteenth* chapters, connect *directly* with ver. 7 of chap. x. and *indirectly*, with ver. 15 of chap. xi.

These seven vials are said to be *the seven last plagues*, and are represented as for the accomplishment of the final and everlasting ruin of *Babylon the Great;* it follows, therefore, that they must belong to that *third woe*, which the sounding of the trumpet of the *seventh* angel brings, as we read both in chapters x. and xi. and which immediately follows the fall of the *tenth part* of the great Anti-christian city; or one of the ten kingdoms, which compose the empire of the *ten-horned* beast; or (as it is in *chapter* xvii.) *which gave their power to the beast.* But this correspondence you must examine at your leisure: And to encourage your investigations, it is written, *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.*

In this *sixteenth* chapter, the progress of the divine judgments is marked out by the pouring out

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out of *seven vials*, or bowls, of God's wrath, and which, I think, there are many reasons to suspect, began to be poured out in 1792. The *first*, you see, is poured out upon *the earth*; the *second*, upon *the sea*; the *third*, upon *the rivers*; the *fourth*, upon *the sun*; the *fifth*, upon *the seat of the beast*; the *sixth* upon *the great river Euphrates*; and the *seventh* into *the air*. The former are local, the last general.

Whatever we may think of the first *four*, there can be but little doubt, that the *fifth* refers to Rome, the seat of the spiritual Anti-christian empire; and the *sixth* to the empire of the Turks; for, that the same power is here intended by *the great river Euphrates*, as by the *four destroying angels*, which the sixth trumpet (chap. ix.) brought from this same river, cannot well be doubted; and most are agreed, that those *four angels*, which were *loosed to slay the third part of men*, signified those Turks (said to be four sultanies) which being united under *Othman*, in the year 1300, laid the foundations of that terrible Turkish power, which God, in his righteous providence, employed to execute his vengeance on apostate Christians.

I may be mistaken; but I very much suspect, that these *fifth* and *sixth* vials of God's wrath on the Papal and Turkish powers, *began to be* poured out in 1797, and that the present moment

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ment is that of the episode contained in verses 13, 14, and 15.

If it be thus, at what an awfu period do we live!—Events will soon determine.—But, though it should not be exactly thus, yet, that we live in very awful times is unquestionable; and that the aspect of things *looks*, as if the prophecies, which speak of the fall of *Babylon the Great*, and the breaking to pieces of the great image of monarchical power, were about to be acomplished, most thinking Christians allow. And if so, then this *coming* of Jesus Christ, of which the text speaks, *cannot* be *very* far off.

Behold, I come as a thief, at a time when little expected. *Blessed is he that watcheth.* Happy will he be, who, in the exercise of faith in the promise of my coming, observes "The signs of the times," and prepares for the event.—And *keepeth his garments lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*—Garments are the symbols of a person's state, condition, and quality. To *keep our garments*, therefore, means to keep our Christian faith and virtue whole and undefiled; to live and act as becomes the disciples of Jesus Christ; that, at whatsoever season he comes, we may be prepared to appear before *his* presence, and that of the innumerable multitude who will attend his *second advent;* for, as goodly garments cover and adorn the body, and are required of those who stand in the presence of princes, and associate

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ciate with their household; so these are necessary to qualify us for appearing before the King of Kings, and standing in the congregation of the righteous; and those, who, like the inattentive and dissolute, are, in this sense, found filthy and naked, will be filled with shame, and experience rejection.

II. But we hasten, *secondly*, to a brief consideration of the *interesting fact*, to which these words call our attention, *the coming of our Lord as a thief.*

We are assured that Jesus Christ will *come* again. Hence he said to his Apostles, *I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. This same Jesus,*—said the angels to the gazing disciples at Christ's ascension—*This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* And for what purpose is he to come? He himself, and his Apostles, have sufficiently informed us. He is to come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, *that all nations may be gathered before him, and every man receive as his works have been.* This is the design of that *second appearance* of the Son of God, for which Christians—that they may see his face in peace—are enjoined, particularly, to look and prepare.

But

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But the phrases, *the coming of the Lord; the coming of the day of the Lord; the Son of Man shall come in the clouds of heaven,* and such like, are of equivocal signification, and do not always refer to that awful, and glorious descent, of which we have been speaking.

The *coming of the Lord,* sometimes means nothing more than God's ordinary dispensations, both in providence and grace, towards his people, and for the confusion of his, and their enemies. *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down. God came from Teman,* says Habakkuk, *and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.—Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt,* says Isaiah.

We speak of the Messiah's appearance in his humiliation as his *first coming;* and of his descent to judgment as his *second coming.* But, besides these, his personal appearances, there are other senses in which he is said to *come.* Thus he speaks of his executing the divine judgments on the Jewish nation, in Matt. x. 23. where he says to his disciples, *Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.—But when they shall persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel,* TILL THE SON OF MAN BE COME. And, in this sense it was, that

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that the Apostle John tarried till *he came**. And thus, in Rev. xiv. where the judgments of the latter days are represented under the images of *a harvest* and *a vintage*, the Lord Jesus is represented as sitting on a white cloud, with a sharp sickle in his hand, to reap the earth: symbols which are descriptive of the execution of the same judgments as those of which our Saviour speaks in the latter part of his discourse on the mount of Olives†; and to which the Apostle Paul refers, when he says to the Thessalonians, (2 Ep. ii. 8.) of "the man of sin," *whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of* HIS COMING.

Thus the execution of the divine judgments, in a providential way, is sometimes called *the coming of the Lord.*—But it is his *personal* appearance to judge the world in righteousness, which is eminently spoken of as his COMING; and it is to this event, that our attention is ultimately directed in the solemn warning in our text.

But, by *the coming of the Lord*, and *the coming of the day of the Lord*, and the like expressions, in the Holy Scriptures, I apprehend, we are

* John, xxi. 22.

† That the *latter* part of this discourse of our Lord relates to the latter times of the world, I have endeavoured to prove in my WORD IN SEASON.

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often not to understand *the act of a small portion of time;* or *one* event, but a *series* of events, which occupy a considerable space of time; but spoken of as *one* act of coming, and as *one* day or season, on account of the intimate relation of these events, and the *comparative* shortness of the portion of time which they are to occupy. The *coming* of Jesus Christ is *progressive;* it commences with those providential judgments, which are to prepare his way, and ends in his personal appearance.

Yes, Jesus Christ will come to execute vengeance on the enemies of his kingdom—the destroyers of the earth, and persecutors of his church—*and there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars,* (metaphorical language, to signify the calamities which will afflict the governing powers) *and upon the earth distress of nations; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven:* and the same Jesus who was taken up to heaven in a cloud, shall so come in like manner. His first approaches will be in providential judgments, for the punishment of the wicked nations, and for the purification of his church; and, when these are fulfilled, then "every eye shall see him." He is gone to prepare a place for his people. To *all* his servants he has assigned their portion of work, and to all will he give as their works have been.

It is in reference to this his *progressive* coming, both

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both to sift the nations and to reckon with his servants, that he says in this *timely warning. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*—" As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For, as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking; and marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Men may be warned, as the men before the flood were, but they will not take warning, their hearts will be hardened in unbelief. God's long threatened judgments will fall upon them but they will not look upon them as visitations for their crimes, nor at all—as to any good moral purposes—consider from whence they come; but will gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme. The darkness will spread; the nations will shake; and one mountain and island after another will flee away; but the wicked will do wickedly. They will not look beyond second causes; and, having no faith in God's promises, or fear of his threatenings, will push on to their destruction.——" The nations are angry, and thy wrath is come!"——The awful scene moves forward, step by step, with an accelerating progress, but God is not seen, and, therefore, men repent not of the work of their hands, nor set themselves to reform those corruptions,

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ruptions, private or public, which have kindled the wrath of God against them.——And, alas! the servants of the great house-holder too, are many of them forgetful of their Lord's commands. Some are smiting their fellow servants, or eating and drinking with the drunken, and most, instead of being like unto servants waiting for their Lord, are "slumbering and sleeping." *As it was in the days of Lot; even so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh.*

O that this timely, and solemn warning, may affect us as it ought! *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.* Lord! make us to hear thy voice, that we may watch and pray always! Teach us to observe and own thy judgments which are in the earth, that we may learn righteousness, and be among *the wise* who *understand*, and who shall be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.

III. My friends! the *third* thing which demands our attention, is the part, which it becomes us to act, in prospect of THE COMING OF CHRIST; and the *blessedness* of those who are found in their duty. *Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*

To watch and keep our garments, is to be attentive to what Jesus our Lord and Master has taught; to look well to our character and conduct; to be active in the service of God, and to

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give heed, that we be prepared to give up our account.

There are duties which belong to all Christians in common; and *special* duties which belong to persons in particular stations and circumstances. The greater number concern all. On all it is enjoined to try their ways; to repent of their sins, and work righteousness: on all it is enjoined, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to practise piety towards God; justice and mercy towards men, and all the duties of contentment, temperance, and chastity, and other virtues, becoming our rational nature, and Christian calling. *Blessed is that servant, who, at his Lord's coming, shall be found so doing!* But, be assured, if your conduct be the contrary, however splendid your profession, you will be rejected!

1. One essential part of this *watching*, and *keeping our garments*, to which we are called, is *examination* to discover wherein our character and conduct is offensive to God, and to *repent* and *reform*.

Every man's chief attention should be directed to himself, to ascertain his own moral character, and his state towards God: to examine what is amiss in his own temper and conduct, that he may repent and turn to God with all his heart. And this should, particularly, engage us on this day. The mass of public guilt is made up of that of

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of individuals, and every one should enquire, *What have I done?* The concern of every one should be, that *he* may obtain grace to repent, and that *his* portion of the public guilt, which has provoked the displeasure of God, and brought our country to the present awful crisis, may be taken away, and not be accessary in drawing down upon the nation the avenging judgments of God.

Did we thus see a large portion of the people —even though they were *not* the majority—truly repenting and turning to God with their whole hearts—taking shame to themselves, and justifying God in his righteous judgments, and more ready to reproach themselves than the enemy, who,—criminal as their restless ambition is—are the rod which Providence justly uses for our punishment—there would then be some grounds for a rational hope, that the God of our fathers would not forsake us, and give us over into the hand of our enemies.

But, it must not be disguised, that, to ensure the public safety against the desolations, which seem to be specially commissoned, for the overthrow of unrighteous systems of oppression, civil and ecclesiastical; and for the punishment of the nations that have tolerated them, there is something more than *individual* repentance and *private* reformation, necessary. It is what may be called *national repentance*, and *public reformation.*

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We are called this day to take a particular interest, in our devotions before God, in the public concerns of our country. That, in our devotions we may feel as we ought to feel, and not have our prayers rejected because we ask amiss, it is necessary to reflect upon our moral character and practice as a nation. As a people about whom appears gathering a most awful tempest, and, as just entering upon a tremendous contest for their very existence, it interests both rulers and the ruled, both high and low, to examine our national moral character and practice; to compare it with the principles and laws of that religion we profess; to consider what is unchristian, and—as a proof of the sincerity of our repentance, and of our concern to obtain the divine favour and protection, as we profess to solicit—to set ourselves, every one in his place, to reform what appears a violation of our Christian principles, and the cause of that anger under which we are fallen. Without this—whether rulers or subjects—our professions are hypocrisy, and our fastings and prayers an abomination in the sight of God.

Were it proper, or necessary, in this place, to particularize our great *national* sins, where, alas! should we begin, or where could we end? As to *individual* virtue, and the *number* of them that fear God, the present age, I believe, surpasses most that have gone before it, yet—paradoxical as it may seem—as to *national* crimes, and *public* depravity,

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depravity, we are arrived at a height never before attained. If we look near home, what barefaced corruption, and general loss of all public virtue! And the *national*—for such it must be called—the *national* forgetfulness of God, as *the Governor among the nations;* and our almost utter disregard of his judgments, cannot but strike every serious observer. God proclaims his anger against the sins of the nations, as with the thunder of heaven; yet, we hear not; He writes his vengeance as with the blaze of lightning; yet, we see not. *For this peoples' heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing; and their eyes they have closed.*

Or, if we direct our views to our foreign possessions, in the *East* or in the *West*, and form our judgment of our national moral character from what we there see; how humbling the conclusion we must draw against ourselves! what lust of dominion! what rage for gold! and into what wickedness does our passion for commerce betray us! The crimes connected with the *slave trade* alone, if no other guilt existed, are enough to fill the hearts of all thinking men with terror, for the wrath which *must* hang over *that* nation, that can practise, or tolerate, such enormous wickedness.

But we will turn to the Church: "For the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet"—"For

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they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God."—Alas! "These have broken the yoke and burst the bonds."—"They all look to their own way; every one for his gain from his quarter."—"How is the gold become dim! the fine gold changed!"

As to the general run of professors, among all sects, "They are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria.—They stretch themselves on their couches; chaunt to the sound of the viol; eat the lambs out of the flock, and drink wine in bowls—but they have not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph."—"*Woe to them**."—And, is not that saying fulfilled in a great part of the more sincere and serious. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

To what quarter shall we look, my friends, where that does not meet our eyes, which does not remind us of the causes which operated for the dissolution of ancient states and empires? and which does not fill us with fear for the judgments of God? *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.*

"But these things are beyond our power of correction." True: but to form a just estimate of our national character, or any right notions of the present danger, it is necessary to consider them well; impartially and seriously. And, on

* Amos vi. 1-6.

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the present occasion—unless we come here to flatter ourselves, and rail before God against our enemies—a serious attention to our *national* sins, as well as to our *private* ones, should be engaged in, for the purpose of exciting a proper humility, and giving a right direction to our devotions. Let us not beat the air, nor mock God; but confess where our guilt lies, and set ourselves to perform our part towards a thorough reformation. And where this reformation lies beyond the sphere of our exertions, let us pray that God may dispose the hearts of those, with whom the power of such reform is lodged, to set about it without delay or palliation. Thus the poorest and meanest, may be useful to his country by his prayers—for the prayers of a righteous man avail much—and thus, for the sake of the righteous souls, who plead for our Sodom, the anger of God may be averted: for God is no respecter of persons; nor hath He any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, but that he should return from his ways and live *. O did we but see this prayed-for repentance, and zeal for reformation, we might then hope, that the providence of God would go forth with our fleets and armies, and disappoint the wicked intentions of our enemies! But, I acknowledge, that, whatever our fastings and prayers, or whatever the strength and vigilance of our navy; or the number and zeal of our armies,

* Ezek. xviii.

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if we go on, as hitherto, in multiplying and increasing our private vices, and in continued resistance against all reformation of our public corruptions and national sins, I entertain the most fearful apprehensions that GOD WILL BE AGAINST US; and that our endeared constitution and liberties will soon be lost, and our country ruined.—If God be *against us*, who can be for us? or what can serve our interest?

"But we are in the height of our power; possess great advantages and immense resources." True: and was not this the case with ancient *Babylon*, with *Egypt*, and with *commercial Tyre*, against whom the Prophets of God prophesied? But they fell; and why? Because their wickedness was increased, and *God was against them*. And is it not to be lamented that *our* sins increase more and more with increasing wealth and power, and that there appears less and less disposition to amendment? Profane swearing; perjury; bribery; drunkenness; adultery; sabbath breaking; and contempt of all religious duties and restraints, abound and prevail more and more. Still the lust of conquest enflames us; still the cries of the oppressed, and the groans of the enslaved, ascend to heaven against us, and few care for any of these things; few lay to heart the crying sins of our country, or seem at all solicitous for their reformation. And though the most awful judgments threaten us, and are, in part, already felt; yet, from the general corruption of the religious and moral

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moral principle, few of us are affected as we ought, or at all humbled before God. Idle, and loose, and riotous amusements—*all* of them indecorous at such times as these, and *some* of them criminal at all times—are resorted to and multiplied—even to the occupation of the holy sabbath—as if we meant that our dissipations should keep an equal pace with our miseries and dangers.

From this slight view of our moral and religious character—and, in the presence of the righteous Judge of all, I believe it is, as far it goes, a just and impartial one—are there not grounds for the most afflicting apprehensions, lest that "cup of trembling" which God has been sending round to the neighbouring nations, and making them to drink of, should soon be sent to us?

And what is the use to which we should turn these reflections and considerations? To think seriously; and seek God with all our hearts; to rouse ourselves from our dreams of security, and, whilst we use the proper human means for our defence, place our trust where, alone, it ought to be; not "in an arm of flesh," nor "in the man that shall die," but, in *the living God*, who hath heard our fathers when they called upon him, and will ever be a refuge—whatever storms or dangers may surround them—to all those who flee to him—And let us see that our trust be not a vain presumption;

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sumption ; but proved to be good by the fruits which attend it.

2. But we must not forget, that Christians are not only to watch and take care, that they may be prepared for the coming of Christ, by *examination* and *repentance*, but, also, by *attention to the signs of his coming*. The promise is, *that, at the time of the end, the wise shall understand,*—at least enough to excite their expectation of the near approach of their Lord, and to stir them up to preparation.—*Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees,* (says Jesus Christ), *when they now shoot forth, you see and know of yourselves, that summer is now nigh at hand ; so likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass*—those things of which he had been speaking as immediately to precede his coming —*know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*

Were it not for trespassing too much on your time, I might direct your attention to many important prophesies, both in the Old, and in the New Testaments, which are peculiarly interesting at the present moment. And here are, indeed, in the context, within a very narrow compass, marks and signs to be discovered, of so distinct and decisive a nature, as to be, I think, more than sufficient to determine, and thoroughly fix the judgment of the attentive and unbiassed Christian, as to the great object of his hope, *the coming of Christ ;* that it is at no *very* great distance ;

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tance; though *how near*, it would be as rash, as impossible, to say.—But these investigations I must refer to your retired reflections: only observing, that, when ye shall see the breaking to pieces of the kingdoms of the *fourth monarchy*; that is, those kingdoms of Europe, "which have given their power to the Beast."—When ye shall see the complete ruin of the papal usurpation; the fall of the Turkish Empire; the binding of the imperial dragon*; the *tenfold* division of the empire of the papal beast, called *the great city*, reduced to *three*, and the restoration of the Jews from their dispersions; or, when ye shall see a number of these predicted events come to pass, *then know ye, that the coming of the Lord is nigh at hand, even at the doors.*

But before we part, Christians, let me again most seriously charge you—and charge myself especially—constantly to bear in mind the great injunction of our Lord to all his Disciples. *Watch, for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he*

* The sentiments of the author relative to the binding of *the imperial Dragon*, may be seen in his late publication, entitled THE DESTINY OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE. And whether the conjectures there stated, are corroborated, or otherwise, by what has taken place since their publication, those, who attend to such matters, must judge. The author's opinion is, that, as far as things have proceeded, every thing goes to confirm them.

walk

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walk naked, and they see his shame. Blessed are they, who, when the Lord cometh, shall be found doing as he hath commanded! Who shall be found holding the world with a slack hand, ready to let it go, and part with all its gains, and honours and pleasures, for the sake of Christ, and for the hope of eternal life! who shall not only be watching *the signs* of Christ's coming, but who shall be also watching over their temper and conduct; and so ordering themselves, both in private and in public, that they may adorn the doctrine of their Lord and Saviour, and be prepared to enter into his kingdom! Blessed are they, who, animated by the holy and benevolent Gospel they have received, are active in their exertions, for the honour of God; for the peace and happiness of mankind; for the maintenance of pure religion, and in the cause of truth and virtue in the world, in opposition to the growing impiety and mischief of the wicked! Such are "Workers together with God," and shall be owned as *His people*, at THE COMING OF CHRIST.

And let us remember, that, as the *coming of the Lord draws near*, the necessity of watchfulness becomes more imperious. Let the deistical, the profane and the thoughtless, despise the impending danger, and mock at this timely warning, but let Christians *watch and keep their garments.*

WATCH, for that will be a day of abounding infidelity; and especially with respect to the particular

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ticular promise of Christ's coming. Acquaint yourselves well, therefore, with the evidences of your religion, and the grounds of your hope, that you may thus be furnished with defence against "the cunning craftiness of men, who lie in wait to deceive."

WATCH by attention to "the signs of the times," because, if we argue, not only from the word of God, but from analogy, there is reason to expect, that the prophesies and promises, which relate to *the coming of the Lord*, will, as the time of their accomplishment draws near, particularly, be generally neglected and misunderstood, if not wilfully perverted. Thus it was with respect to those which related to the first appearance of the Messiah; the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. WATCH, therefore, for you are to expect no advantage, or assistance from the example or diligence of the generality of professing Christians. No. There will be no general expectation of what is coming: nor belief in the fulfilment of God's word; however remarkable and obvious the fulfilment of it may be: the more attention, therefore, on your part, will be necessary, to keep your minds alert amidst the general slumber, and your judgments unbiassed by the prevailing delusions.

I add, WATCH, *lest ye partake in the sins of Babylon, and receive of her plagues.* "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Pray for, and seek the peace of your country. Let no man have

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have just cause to blame you. But, let not a time-serving spirit, or any worldly policy, or carnal motive, blind your eyes, and make you forget whose servants you are, and the hopes of immortality to which you look forward.

WATCH—at the present moment, *watch*. For hark! The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness, and all the cedars of Lebanon tremble. Behold! He measureth the earth; He driveth asunder the nations; the mountains are scattered; the hills bow; the kingdoms shake. He hath smitten them with a continual stroke. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Watch and pray always; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what Jesus Christ saith to one, He saith unto all, *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.*

THE END.

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